

# Treehouse "Tots"

## Growth Milestones - FOUR MONTHS "Emerging Personality"

The 4-month-old infant is beginning to settle in by establishing regular sleeping and feeding cycles. He is also showing endless interest in his environment. The following comments are designed to help you and your partner enjoy your 4-month-old while continuing to gain confidence in yourselves as parents. This information is not intended as a substitute for well-baby visits by your newborn's pediatrician. Never hesitate to ask your child's physician for guidance concerning specific problems. This is the reason for regular well-baby checkups.

### Parenting and Behavioral

- This is an enjoyable time for you and your baby. He or she is exploring more and trying to make contact with his surroundings.
- Continue to hold, cuddle, talk to, sing to and rock your baby as much as you can. Every interaction stimulates brain development.
- Introduce age appropriate toys and colorful books to your baby.
- Since the 4-month-old infant is more active, spitting up is common at this age, so have a good supply of absorbent bibs to protect your baby's skin and clothing from being constantly wet.
- If the mother has returned to a second job outside the home, she needs to feel comfortable with the child care arrangements she has made for her baby.
- Parents need to keep in contact with friends and family to avoid social isolation.

### Development

- A baby's development proceeds in a head to foot direction. At this age the typical child can hold his head high and raise the body on his hands while lying on his stomach.
- The 4-month-old baby keeps his hands open while at rest. He will play with his or her hands, bat at mobiles and reach for rattles. Any object he holds often goes directly into his mouth.
- Most babies this age will show a clear preference for parents and other caregivers. They will turn toward a sound and recognize their parents' voices. Four-month-old infants babble, smile, laugh and squeal.
- The 4-month-old baby also begins to learn cause and effect.

### Feeding

- Feeding times may become interesting! Your baby will begin responding to all the sights and sounds of his environment.
- Frequently, the baby may become so interested in his world that he or she may refuse to settle down to eat. He will take a few swallows of formula or breast milk and then stop to see what is going on in the room.
- Most pediatricians start solid foods sometime between ages 4 and 6 months. If your baby sits well when supported, holds his head up and seems to be hungry, it may be time to begin cereal. Begin with infant rice cereal. Mix a couple of teaspoons with

breast milk or formula until it becomes a thin soup. Place the spoon about half way back on the baby's tongue to teach swallowing. As your baby gets the hang of it, increase the thickness and amount of the cereal. If your baby pushes the solid food out of his or her mouth, it does not necessarily mean he or she does not like what you're giving him.

- Babies have a tongue reflex that causes them to push anything out of their mouth.
- Remember to give vitamins and/or fluoride if prescribed by your child's doctor.
- Never put your baby to bed with a bottle or prop it in his mouth.
- Ask your pediatrician about giving diluted juices.
- Between now and the next checkup, many babies begin to drool. This is quite common and does not necessarily indicate early teething. It is probably due to a lot of saliva that the baby has not yet learned to swallow.

#### **At this Checkup**

- An important part of each well-child visit is the evaluation of the baby's growth. In the vast majority of children, growth falls within normal ranges on the standard growth curves for weight, height or head size. The smooth curves of a growth chart might create the impression that a baby grows in a continuous, smooth manner. Instead, growth usually occurs in spurts. Therefore, single growth (height, weight, head size) measurement at any particular month in a child's life is of limited value - more important is the child's rate of growth over time.
- The 4-month old will also be checked for physical and developmental growth.

#### **Sleep**

- Always put your baby to sleep on his back. Alternate the end of the crib where you place his head so your baby does not always sleep with his head on one side. If you wake up and find your baby has rolled over onto his stomach, don't panic. If the child can roll over, he is at a reduced risk for SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).
- Encourage your baby to console himself by putting your child to bed awake. Teach your 4-month-old self-soothing techniques by providing him with a transitional object, such as a stuffed animal, blanket or favorite toy.
- Keep to your established bedtime routine and other habits to discourage night awakening.

#### **Immunizations**

- Since immunization schedules vary from doctor to doctor, and new vaccines may have been introduced, it is always best to seek the advice of your child's health care provider concerning your child's vaccine schedule.

Immunizations recommended at this age include:

- Haemophilus Influenza Type b (Hib) Vaccine #2
- Diphtheria, Tetanus, Acellular Pertussis (DTaP) Vaccine #2
- Inactivated Poliovirus (IPV) Vaccine #2
- Prevnar (Pneumococcal) Vaccine #2
- Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) Vaccine #2 (To be administered at 2 or 4 months)
- Rotateq (Rotavirus) Vaccine #2

#### **Safety**

- Now that your baby is more active, parents need to be especially careful not to leave the child anywhere from which he can fall. Always keep one hand on the baby and never turn your back when you put your infant on a sofa, bed, changing table or any other high place. Your baby demands your full attention.
- Continue to use an infant car seat that is properly secured at all times.
- If your home uses gas appliances, install and maintain carbon monoxide detectors.
- Continue to keep the baby's environment free of smoke. Keep the home and car nonsmoking zones.

- Do not drink hot liquids or smoke while holding the baby.
- Remember, everything a 4-month holds goes in his mouth, so keep toys with small parts out of reach. Warn siblings to keep these objects away from their little baby brother or sister.
- Do not use an infant walker at any age. The walkers are dangerous and do not help your baby's motor development.

### **Eliminations**

- Your baby will have his own frequency of bowel movements.
- Most babies strain, grunt and fuss when they have bowel movements. This does not mean they are constipated.

### **When to Call the Doctor**

- Anything that bothers you!
- Not gaining weight.
- Your baby seems stiff or floppy.
- Becomes totally uninterested in eating.
- Your baby cannot hold a rattle or doesn't babble.
- Eyes are crossed most of the time.
- You have not seen any developmental changes since the last checkup.

*The information presented in Growth Milestones was obtained with the help of our pediatric experts and with material from The American Academy of Pediatrics' Guidelines for Health Supervision and Bright Futures' Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents. Bright Futures is supported by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*